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PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE OF THE FOREIGN MISSION BOARDS

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The boards have responded promptly and generously to the request from the Missionary Research Library for their promotional materials. The literature received has been classified and most of it is here on exhibit. All has been gone over, though of course much of it has not been read in detail. For this there has not been time; and in any case, objective, painstaking, general sampling may be regarded as the essential, so far as this paper is concerned.

After many years of daily handling of printed matter bearing on missions, I faced a hundred pounds or so of leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, maps and charts, and, it may now be told, with no great bubbling of enthusiasm. Nevertheless, day after day spent on this output of devoted minds and hearts left me fairly tingling with the challenge of it all. For the most part the materials are rich in content, sturdy in presentation, dignified and attractive in format. I kept catching glimpses of penetrating discernments, of broad and generous appreciations, of far-sighted purposes. Probably the promotional literature of the foreign missionary agencies of Canada and the United States was never on a higher plane, more ably edited, or more attractively presented. This is no formal tender of courtesy but rather a word of hearty and sincere recognition.

Those boards with relatively few fields may need to broaden their presentations, and those pronouncedly conservative perhaps ought to enrich their tracts with a better assortment of facts. Also, there might well be more coöperation in this field of promotional literature. More sharing of vigorous pens, of editorial and artistic gifts, and of illustrative resources, should prove a help all around. In many cases, those who are responsible for producing promotional literature can get stimulating hints from the exhibit.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Now, if this literature, wrung out of the agonies of the decade since Jerusalem, is as good as it truly seems to be, why does it not function more effectively? Why does it not take hold on many of our church folk with more of grip and thrust, set their imaginations on fire, stir their consciences, move them to deeply purposeful action?

The answers to these questions should be of concern for us here. Though this literature might be measurably improved, it is my firm conviction that the major difficulty lies not in the inherent qualities of the literature itself but rather in the present situation of the missionary enterprise, and in the attitudes of a growing number of our church people towards this enterprise.

Generally speaking, the motives, the ideals, set forth by the Jerusalem Conference now hold this promotional field. Often this is explicit in the literature before us, more often implicit, but the Jerusalem utterances indicate fairly closely where ideologically the North American missionary movement stands today.

Now the soundness of the Jerusalem utterances is not up for discussion. No one here will hold that there can be a militant missionary enterprise based on anything less sturdy than the Jerusalem statements. Moreover, it will rightly be urged that truth abides, that the support of missions has always been by a faithful minority, and that this minority will vary in strength from time to time. Nevertheless, the constituency of missions to which the Jerusalem positions seem to be adequate and beyond question, and, therefore, the constituency for which this promotional literature is undeniably a literature of challenge and of power, appears to be lessening in numbers and to be going up in age level. There are no satisfactory statistics to support this bald statement, unless it be the treasurers' reports, and these by implication. I believe, however, that the statement is true. If any here are convinced that it is untrue for particular constituencies, I do not press the case. If there are those who believe it to be generally untrue, then by those persons the remainder of what I shall say should be discounted in advance and completely. At least let us be forthright with reference to where we are.

THE CONSTITUENCY TO BE REACHED

Let me repeat, therefore, that a difficulty with this promotional literature is that its presuppositions, its postulates, its basic positions, are not those of a considerable and growing part of the presumptive constituency to which it is intended to appeal. On the other hand, we are able still to carry on a \$25,000,000 Protestant foreign missionary enterprise from North America because there are many millions of people for whom the basic positions of this literature are satisfactory and assured, and for whom the literature appears to be truly effective through its facts and its interpretations.

Now if the numbers of unconvinced are growing, if they belong to a particular group or class, if they are characterized by a particular age level, and if in the nature of the case, they tend to displace our present assured constituency because of the age characteristics of the

two groups, then we are confronted by situations calling for most careful consideration. If to such groups the Jerusalem positions are unappealing or unconvincing, and if we want the coöperation and financial support of such people, then they must either be won to the Jerusalem positions, or else other grounds of appeal or other methods of approach must be found. Otherwise, so far as the support of these individuals is concerned, the enterprise must get along without them.

THE POST-WAR PERIOD

The Jerusalem utterances were formulated by a missionary leadership that for the most part came out of the pre-war generation. It might fairly be asked how far those utterances truly carried the disillusioned youth who were still Christian in purpose and desire and who had been coming into leadership during the post-war decade. Of course we shall never be able to say. Then came the explosion of 1929, and for those who have come to maturity in the eight years since the depression began, what does, what could, Jerusalem mean? These younger people have watched their world in continuous upheaval. No security, no sure bases for life, the economic order topsyturvy, education at sixes and sevens, the churches distraught. Seemingly no anchorage ground for mind and heart anywhere. Why should they be concerned with the utterances of a missionary conference in Palestine that took itself very seriously but was so pitifully and utterly unaware that the world's economic volcano was about to erupt? Why should they assert or accept Christian positions which to them seem to spell unreality?

To be sure, certain of those of the post-war, and especially now of the depression, generations do not really know or seemingly greatly care what is happening of vital significance in missions or anywhere else. Others perhaps better informed dig in to protect what they can get their hands on, without showing much social or religious, let alone world, concern. But not a few want a new deal all around; they are frankly reaching after a new world order. The latter group hold the future, for they have moral purpose, a sense of direction, and a readiness to act. For such, there have been great searchings of heart and great resolves of heart. Economic coöperation? Yes. Interracial justice? Yes. International forthrightness and fellowship? Yes. World peace? Yes. Foreign missions? No sure note in the replies now.

HOW FAR DO THEY GO?

But how far do such as these go in their discernment of the spiritual bases for a moral order? How about their searchings after the deeper springs of life, or to use another figure, their relatedness to the ultimate roots of character and purpose, which reach to the very nature of God himself? Do they realize that a world order that

can endure must have sure foundations broad enough to undergird a world structure? The profound convictions which lie back of the missionary movement, and which inhere in our faith, have not been experienced or sensed in any great measure by many of these youthful proponents of a new world fabric. At least so it would seem. And when we bring before these younger folk a going missionary enterprise and seek their allegiance, coöperation, and support, we are likely to discover that our religious presuppositions, our theological formularies, our Jerusalem utterances, are to them certainly not challenging, perhaps not even mildly acceptable. Thus it becomes more difficult to promote our enterprise as the age levels both of our older convinced constituency and of these younger unconvinced groups steadily rise.

Ralph Connor, in explaining why he has written a new book about Jesus, says: "Today the Church is calling the youth of our country to rally to her service. The answer flung back is 'Why should we? The Church is falling down on her job. She can't stop war, she can't purge industry of its ruthless greed, she can't give us social justice, she can't teach mankind brotherly love.'" And Ralph Connor continues, "In spite of its glorious history, in spite of its great services today in many areas of life, to these answers the Church can make no reply. To meet these challenges she has no power."

OUR RESOURCES OF INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE

The mission boards, creatures of the churches which brought them into being to serve particular ends, are scarcely in a position themselves to deal with this fundamental situation, for the responsible general leadership of the churches must discern the signs of the times and devise ways—heroic though not necessarily dramatic—for dealing with such emergent conditions. Nevertheless, youth and the younger middle age groups need, and I am sure would come to welcome, the fellowship of mature and competent missionary guides who see deeply and who with utter realism and great forthrightness stand ready to help in bringing all relevant and significant data, of whatsoever kind and from whatsoever source, into the general reckoning. And what an extraordinary wealth of really pertinent data might become accessible just through this missionary enterprise with its world-wide contacts! Where are richer and more significant resources discoverable? If there is to be a new world order the missionary enterprise can be, indeed is bound to be, a vast source of information and of experience, not to speak of the significance of its ongoing movements and the spiritual values of a dynamic sort that can be made accessible through it. But are we to expect that world reconstruction, such as these youth are reaching after, is to be tied to the tail of the missionary kite? Or should the missionary enter-

prise be ready if necessary to lose even its very life, if, through putting its services at the command of youth, some imminent unfolding of the will of God, some undreamed-of fresh revelation of His purpose, some great new day, might come to birth?

PRESENT DAY RELEVANCY

It is well that we should show to younger groups the bearing of our present enterprise on the stream of world events. We cannot and must not do less. And for the sake of those uncounted multitudes afar who are in deep spiritual need we must continue to serve as we can through world missions. But suppose those of the younger generation feel they must start on *their* pilgrimage from just where they are, that is, with their own motives and ideals as these are now, and with their present world view. They may have to become convinced first of the relevance of religion itself, religion in any form, to their present sense of life's values and to the world-order they wish to develop, before they are ready to share in a program for propagating religion here or abroad. They may feel that Christianity in any of its present inadequate expressions leaves so much to be desired that until it is clarified and reformed it ought not to be inflicted on other peoples. They may wish to cross racial and religious lines and with youth of other lands and climes to share in a quest of what together the youth of East and West may think of as the good life. The Christian religion as such may have to be reckoned with if and when it is discovered to be really important, indeed inescapable.

How we long for assurance that those who are taking up the world's load will follow the gleam—their gleam—that even now is summoning them to a new crusade! How we hope that they will follow that gleam to the heights and to the depths, courageously and all the way, until it leads them to some high goal that we or they can not now clearly envisage! We shall be patient; we shall be grateful whenever youth takes the initiative as to what is wanted from us; we shall be as helpful, as understanding, as unceasingly coöperative as we know how to be. But we are convinced that when the lineaments of that goal do come clearly into view, they will be strangely like a pattern once shown us long ago in a mount hard by—Jerusalem.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

I have been drawing "the thing as [I see] it, for the God of things as they are." If what has been said has any genuine relationship to the situation we are confronting among the younger groups in our churches, (and you who hear will have to deny, challenge, change or approve these statements), then the promotional materials of the boards, fine as these materials may be, are measurably if not largely beside the mark, so far as the problem of winning the younger

generation is concerned. For the most part that problem must be dealt with through other types of material.

In the meantime, what seems to us to be terribly urgent needs abroad confront us in the promotional literature of this exhibit. We shall continue unceasingly to cry aloud, and to spare not, on behalf of this our work. We believe that with all its past mistakes and present weaknesses, through this enterprise the work of God has gone forward and will continue to do so. The new world order, if and when it comes, will be the unfolding of His will or it will vanish as the old order is now vanishing. In so far as we build soundly, as in His sight, and for His glory, the results of our enterprise will fit, like tenon to mortise, into the new and worthier world life.

Nevertheless, there are coming on the horizon evidences of need for types of interpretive and promotional literature of which only faint beginnings are discoverable in this exhibit.

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